

# The influence of Christianity on the Bunun language — A preliminary overview

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# Introduction

- Bunun, Austronesian, Taiwan
- Christianity
  - Central to modern Bunun society
  - Often largely ignored in linguistic research

# Introduction

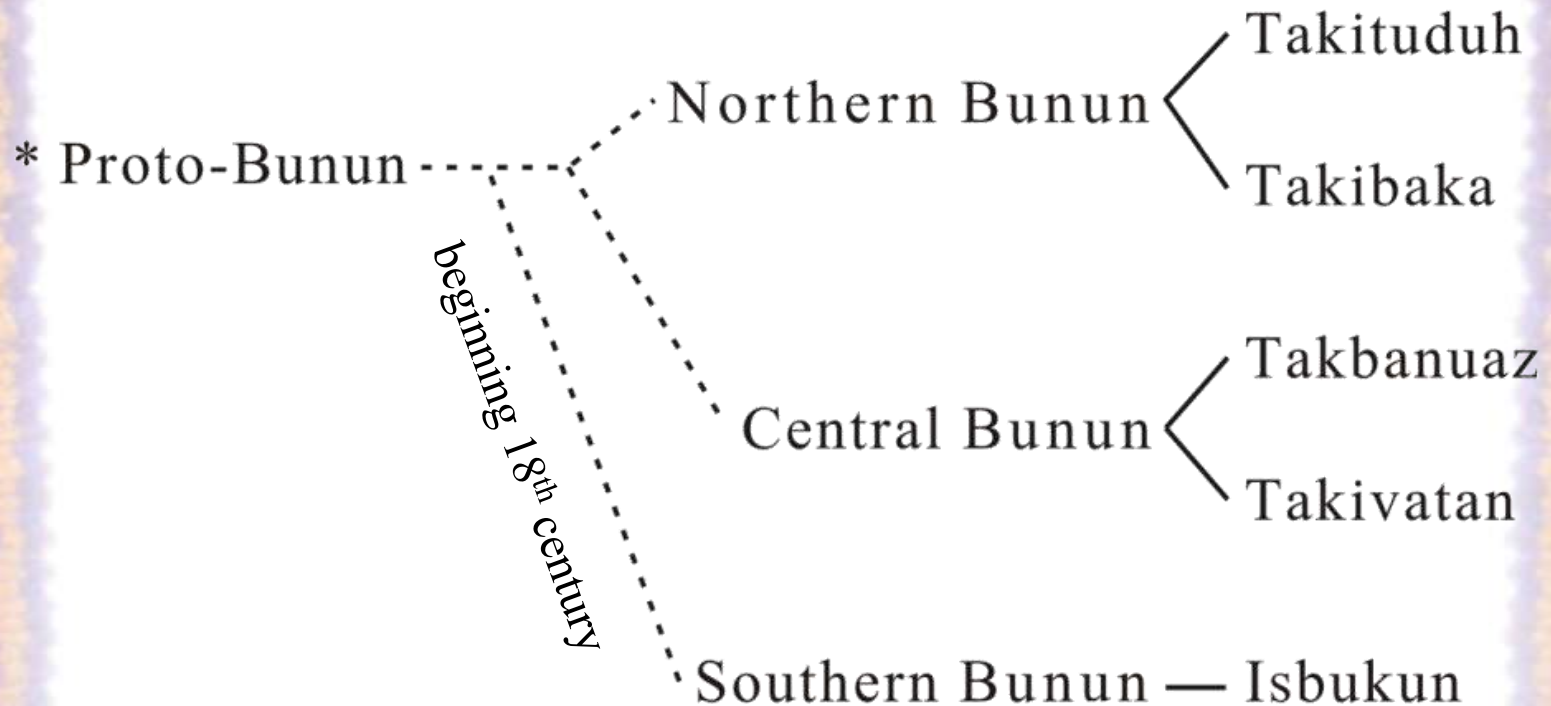
- Influence of Christian religion and religious organisations on:
  - Indigenous rights, incl. language rights
  - The Bunun linguistic system
  - Bunun dialect differentiation / homogenisation
- General overview

# The Bunun language

- Verb-initial
- Philippine-type voice system
- Elaborate verbal morphology
- 50,000 ethnic members,  $\pm$  20,000 speakers
- Five dialects



# The Bunun language



# Traditional culture

- Semi-sedentary family groups
- Non-stratified society
  - Competence / experience determines leadership
- Hunters and headhunters
- Animism
  - Complex system of social taboos (*samu*)
  - Various types of shamans





# Modern transformations

- Japanese Occupation (1895-1945)
  - Concentration of Bunun into (relatively) low-lying villages
  - Introduction modern infrastructure
- Christian missionaries (first half 20<sup>th</sup> cy)
  - Replacement / adaptation traditional belief systems
  - Healthcare and food relief



# Christianity and Bunun

- Two main organizations:
  - Catholic Church
  - Presbyterian Church
- Most Bunun would identify as Christian
- Tightly integrated in most people's daily life

# Christianity and Bunun

- Influence on the Bunun language:
  - Language preservation
    - Indigenization
    - Language documentation
    - Indigenous rights
  - Linguistic impact
    - Bible translations
    - Liturgical practices

# Indigenization

- All churches in aboriginal communities are fully indigenized
  - Bible translation in local language
  - Liturgy and other church activities in local language
  - Local church officials



# Language documentation

- Flahutez, Marcel. 1970. *Dictionnaire Français-Bunun.*
- Duris, Antoine. 1987. *Lexique de la Langue Bunun en Usage a Ma-Hoan.*

# Indigenous rights

- Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines
  - Founded 29 December 1984
  - Indigenous students National Taiwan University
  - Yu-Shan Theological College and Seminary (玉山神學院)

# The Bunun Bible(s)

- **1951:** *Gospel of Matthew* in zhuyin fuhao
- **1955:** Gospel of Luke in zhuyin fuhao
- **1962:** Gospel of Matthew in zhuyin fuhao
- **1983:** New Testament in Roman script
- **1987:** Short Old Testament in Roman script
- **2000:** New Testament + Short Old Testament in Roman script



TAMA DIHANIN  
TU  
HALINGA



布農語聖經  
THE BUNUN BIBLE

# The Bunun Bible(s)

“... the reliance on indigenous categories to translate Christian concepts during the proselytizing process has significant bearings on how Christianity is adopted.”

Yang (2008:70)

# Influence on the lexicon

- Borrowing:
  - Biblical names
  - From Mandarin, English, Japanese or Latin
  - Integrated in native phonology
    - Exceptions: /e/ and word-initial /j/



	Mandarin	English	Latin	Japanese
Matai	馬太 mǎ tài	Matthew	Matthæus	<u>Matai</u>
Maluku	馬可 mǎ kě	<u>Mark</u>	Marcus	Mako
Luka	路加 lù jiā	Luke	<u>Lucas</u>	Ruka
Iuhani	約翰 yué hàn	John	Joannes ( <u>Iohanni</u> )	Yohane
Luma	羅馬 luó mǎ	Romans	ad Romanos	Roma
Kalatia	加拉太 jiā lā tài	<u>Galatians</u>	ad Galatas	Garatea
Ipisu	以佛所 yǐ fó suǒ	Ephesians	ad Ephesios	<u>Epeso</u>
Hebulai	希 <u>伯</u> 來 xī <u>bó</u> lái	<u>Hebrews</u>	ad Hebræos	<u>Heburu</u>
Iakubu	雅各 yǎ gè	James	Jacobi	<u>Yakobu</u>

# Influence on the lexicon

- Conceptual transfer
  - semantic extension of existing religious concepts to a Christian context

<b>Bible</b>	<b>Takivatan</b>	<b>Christian meaning</b>	<b>Traditional meaning</b>
dihanin	diquanin	Heaven	sky
hanitu	qanitu	devil, demon	ghost
sasbinað	sasbinʔað	Lord (God / Jesus)	person of authority

# Influence on the lexicon

- Meaning specialisation
  - General meaning > religious domain

<b>Takivatan</b>	<b>Generic meanings</b>		<b>Religious meaning</b>
isʔaŋ	*breath > feeling > belief	>	Christian faith
liskaʔuni	worship	>	Christian worship, belief
kaʔuni	create, make, construct	>	creation, Genesis
tamasað	strength	>	spirit of God



# Influence on the lexicon

- Derivation and compounding

*is-ka-kaupa*

TRANSFER-CV-all

‘universe, creation’

*tama dihanin*

father heaven

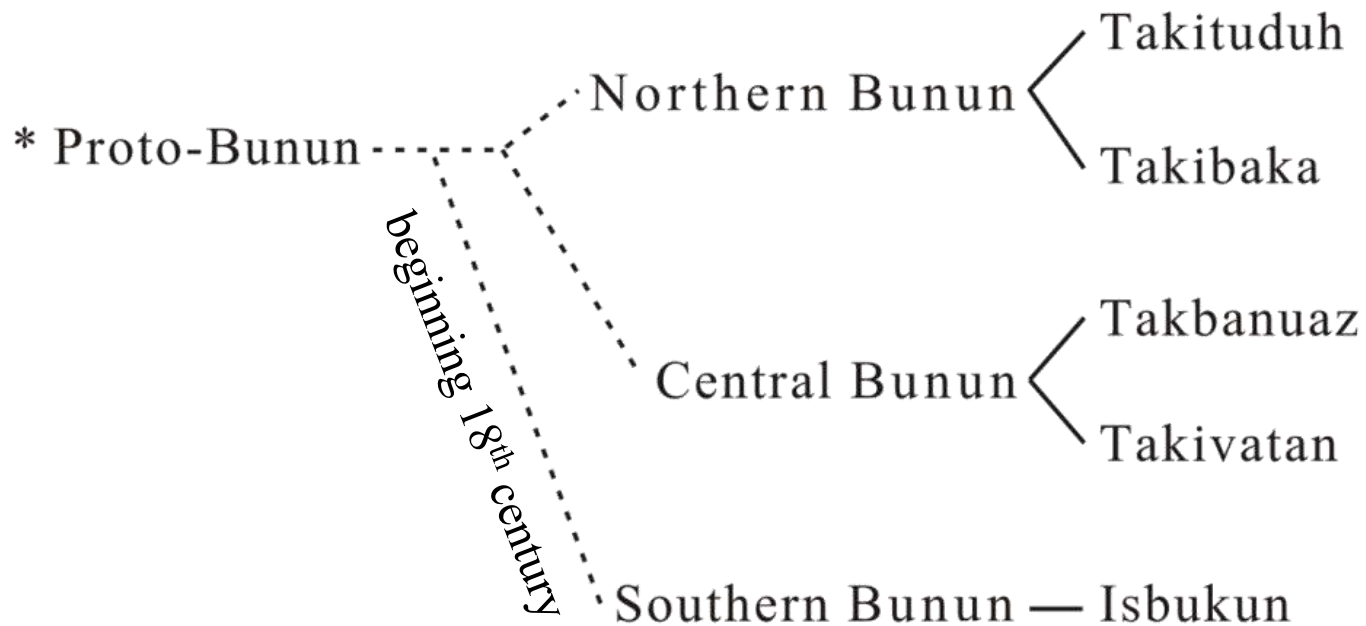
‘God’

# Beyond the lexicon

- Morphology and grammar?
- Narrative and performative genres?
- More research is needed

# Standardization

- Bible translation based on the Isbukun dialect





# Standardization

- Result:
  - Asymmetrical relation between Isbukun and other Bunun dialects
  - Standardization?
  - ... or encroachment?

# Standardization

- Bible

(1) *Masa kitɲab Sasbinað Dihanin kauni mas dalah dihanin.*

*masa kitɲab Sasbinað Dihanin ka-ʔuni mas dalah dihanin*

WHEN begin lord heaven MAKE-be OBL earth heaven

1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

(2) *Iskakaupa hai madumdum niaŋ minʔaiða.*

*iskakaupa hai ma-dumdum ni-aŋ min-ʔaiða*

world TPC STAT-obscured NEG-PROG INCH-exist

1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

# Standardization

- Takivatan

- (3) *Taŋusaŋ matumaskain, siatu, sasaipuk kamisama madaidað mapisðan, maqtu haip tu sanavan minsumaʔa sia tu, takahan tupaun tu Bilisi tu taisʔan, a, tupaun, a, tunaʔiti tupaun tu Pian.*

<i>taŋus-aŋ</i>	<i>matumaskain</i>	<i>sia</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>sa-saipuk</i>	<i>kamisama</i>	
first-PROG	be.grateful	ANAPH	ATTR	CV-take.care.of	God	
<i>ma-daidað</i>	<i>ma-pisðan</i>	<i>maqtu</i>	<i>haip</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>sanavan</i>	<i>min-suma-a</i>
STAT-love	DYN-just	be.possible	today	ATTR	evening	INCH-return-LNK
<i>sia</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>taka-han</i>	<i>tupa-un</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>Bilisi</i>	<i>tu</i>
ANAPH	ATTR	ORIGINATE-go	call-UF	COMPL	Belgium	ATTR
<i>taisʔan</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>tupa-un</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>tauna-ʔiti</i>	<i>tupa-un</i>	<i>tu Pian</i>
relative	INTER	call-UF	INTER	PERL-here	say-UF	COMPL P.

First, I want to thank God for his help and impartial love, and that it is possible that this evening someone has come here, from a place that is called Bilisi (Belgium), a relative, who since he has come here is called Pian.



# Bunun church services

- Language clash: In non-Isbukun communities:
  - Bible + hymns: Isbukun
  - Sermon and other parts: native dialect
  - (Certain hymns and part of the sermon: Mandarin)

# Bunun church services

- Isbukun negatively affects linguistic performance:
  - Reading speed
  - Word-by-word reading
  - Hesitation phenomena
  - Understanding (?)

# Bunun church services

- Sinapalan village, 24 July 2011
- Takbanuað dialect

Sermon  
(native dialect)



Reading NT  
(Isbukun Bible)





# Religious songs

- Adaptation of hymns to traditional Bunun eight-voiced polyphony

Modern



Traditional



# Conclusion

- Christianity affects the development of the Bunun language in various ways
  - Language preservation and documentation
  - Language rights
  - Introduction of new concepts & linguistic change
  - Standardization / dialect leveling
- Its influence is largely positive

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Uninaŋ  
miqumisaŋ!

